4/29/70

Dear Mary,

This letter has nothing to do with the work in which we share an interest. And I'm sending a copy to Gary only, my reason being that if I say of suggest something contrary to his science, he can tell you. And when you think of it, or, when you next write me, please include some of your labels.

Aside from the urgent need of the male body for physical exertion, I find good therapy in the too-little work I do outside. Today, a nice one, I had the radio with me, tuned to the all-news station I can get, and I recall none of it. My mind was not on work. I was thinking of Jimmy Lee, who I do not know and for whom I have no science. I take a friend's liberty also because from one of your letters I developed the I hope incorrect suspicion that the doctors, believing you have money or can get it, may be taking you. What they have been charging you is fantastic.

Your biy came to mind while I was drilling holes in an angle iron with which I hope to straighten carport doors so they can slide on their track. And in the course of time, as you know those in the fifties are wont to do, my mind wandered over my own experiences. With others and as they relate to me. What relates to me may be irrelevent to others.

In my lifetimex I've had some pretty awful diagbosis like shoulder adhesions called "tennis elbow" until I could complete my responsibilities when I used the toilet. There followed a long and painful course of breaking these adhesions. The diagnosis was by two professors of orthopaedic medicine. The anxiety I now have, or it might be more precise to say I now know I have, for it may have been undetected for quite some time, was first diagnosed as exhaustion. So, I begin with the belief that doctors are still mortals. I generally do what they say, because they should know more than I, but I am sometimes skeptical.

When I learned I had anxiety, I tried to find out what it is. We belong to medical coop. I couldn't find out. I asked for and got a psychiatric consultation so I could understand what I had to cope with and how best I might. It was one of the great futilities of my life. I learned what little I know from Gary and another friend who is either a shrink or close to it, for he works in such an institution and is a fine, sensitive guy. I think if I knew more, if I were really satisfied about the diagnoses of the other things that have happened to me, I'd be handling this better than I am.

This is prelude. Now I want to tell you a couple of stories, for whatever relevance you may find in them.

Almost two years ago I was in New Orleans, staying with a friend who also had a young woman guest. She was almost completed her psychiatric studies but in some ways was pretty naive. She had just had an abortion in Mexico and was pretty hung up about it, as I did not know. I was going accross the lake to do some investigating that next day (it was successful, about the camps). My host told me only that this girl could use company and slight courtesies and companionship, that she had had some unpleasant experiences, and why didn't I take her. I did. Had I children, she might have been a younger daughter, there is that much difference in our ages. As the day wore on and she seemed to be staying inside her self, I decided to try and do something about it. I earned her confidence and she poured it all out and she knew I cared. She also knew, of course, that her parents cared, but this seemed to be different to her, because I had no obligation to care.

This is no indirect way on indicating anything sexual, for there was nothing of that. It was just one human being with concern for another. Pretty soon she was listening to me. Then she was asking me. By the time we got back that night she was a different girl. I didn't see her the next day or night, for I stayed pretty much on the go. But the following night I decided to tackle la case, much to the concern of everyone I know, for I have a certain reputation in these circles. Well, lo and behold, before long this girl, radiant as though there had never been an unhappy moment in her life, strolled in with a young man also a friend of our host. I bumped into them several times that night in the Quarter, and she was reborn. Almost immediately she left N.O. for home. I think she had overcome her hangup. She had about men, that's for sure. Often I'd thought about this, and I decided that all her training was nothing, that the thing that made a difference to her was knowing that all men are not like the physically mature child who ran out on her and that there is such a thing as not being alone, as people caring just because there is someone, even a total stranger, who should be cared about.

Now I have do doubt at all that this girl (really woman, but with the difference in ages...) was sincerely loved by her family.

Then there is the guy referred to above, who left N.O. all hung up because of an unhappy love affair. I had met the beauty with whom he had lived. She is also one of the most graceful creatures I've ever met. He had knowledge I wanted. I knew only that they had lived together when I flew out to see him, some distance from here. We never talked about her. He told me, easily, whatxxx I wanted to know and when that was over we just kinda were friends and we just talked, never about his unhappy affair. I think he saw something in me, what I do, why I do it, what it can mean, things like that. And he came to realize that the world is to be joined, not quit. So, he joined it again, is married and I think very happy and I know productive again.

In both cases, I was no more than a catalyst. I had no couch, no training, no skills, nothing more than a genuine love of people and I think each felt it. And I think for each it was the best therapy.

On the other hand, with the girl, I've often wonder what the result would have been if there had been instead a sexual relationship, or just interest. She m might have been looking for any kind of affection, might have grasped at the first straw, might have thrown herself into it in a futile hope and harvested more futility. I say this because it just may be this way with Jimmy and Val. I do not know what you can or should do if you suspect this, but if it is just because she is the first nice girl he's been with since his troubles, if I were you I'd be alert. Now thatthe is home, if I may take another liberty and you think it is not a bad idea, try and get him out so he cannot develop a fixation on her. If he is building something more in his mind than is there, might it not have an adverse effect at some time?

I am also saying something else, something I can ot tell you how to produce or deliver. We all take for granted the love and affection of those close to us, and I think children, no matter how much they know their parents genuinely love them, may also assume parents have no choice. I think if Jimmy can develop any kind of meaningful relationships now with his peers of both sexes it might be the best kind of medicine. And I think he may be inclined to shun it.

Unfortunately, I have little experience along this line upon which to draw. These are two of the more recent things that come to mind as I was thinking about your boy while drilling steel and I send them in the event they can have meaning. Best regard and best luck,